HIGHLIGHTS

Positive Futures - Optimizing Mental Health for Alberta's Children & Youth

A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION (2006 - 2016)

- 1.2 million young Canadians and their families live with mental illness.
- 15 per cent of children and youth have a mental disorder.
- In 2004, 440 people residing in Alberta died by suicide, and 73 of these people were 24 years of age or younger.
- In Canada, the face of depression is getting younger, the average age of onset being 23. The average age of onset is 12 in cases of anxiety disorder and 18 for substance abuse.
- The severity and duration of mental health problems are reduced through early identification and intervention.
- Mental health is more than the absence of mental health disorders or freedom from psychiatric symptoms. It is the capacity of the individual, the group and the environment to interact with one another in ways that promote subjective well-being, the optimal development and use of mental abilities, the achievement of individual and collective goals consistent with justice, and the attainment and preservation of fundamental equality.
- The determinants of health influence the optimal development of children, youth, families and communities.
- Children, youth and families have strengths and potential.
- Children and youth have unique mental health needs that are different from those of adults.

Alberta is committed to supporting the mental well-being of children, youth, and their families, and of providing effective services for those who are experiencing mental health problems. ***Positive Futures - Optimizing Mental Health for Alberta's Children and Youth: A Framework for Action (2006-2016)*** is designed to support a common and integrated approach to optimize the mental health of children and youth ages zero to 24 and their families, and to align with the Provincial Mental Health Plan and other strategic government initiatives.

September 2006

Alberta

THE VISION

Alberta's children and youth will have optimal mental health.

- The mental health of children and youth will be positively impacted in environments where they are safe, well nourished, stimulated, loved and have opportunities to learn and play.
- Respect for autonomy, dignity, culture, spirituality, and diversity of all children, youth and their families will be demonstrated.
- Programs and services specifically designed for children and youth to optimize their mental health will be available.
- Services will be available, accessible and reflect community requirements.
- Optimal mental health for children and youth will be achieved through effective collaborative action based on common goals.
- Children, youth and their families will have opportunities to influence the processes that impact their mental health.

DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Income and social status
Social support networks
Education and literacy
Employment and working conditions
Social environments
Physical environments
Personal health practices and coping skills
Healthy child development
Biology and genetic endowment
Health services
Gender
Culture

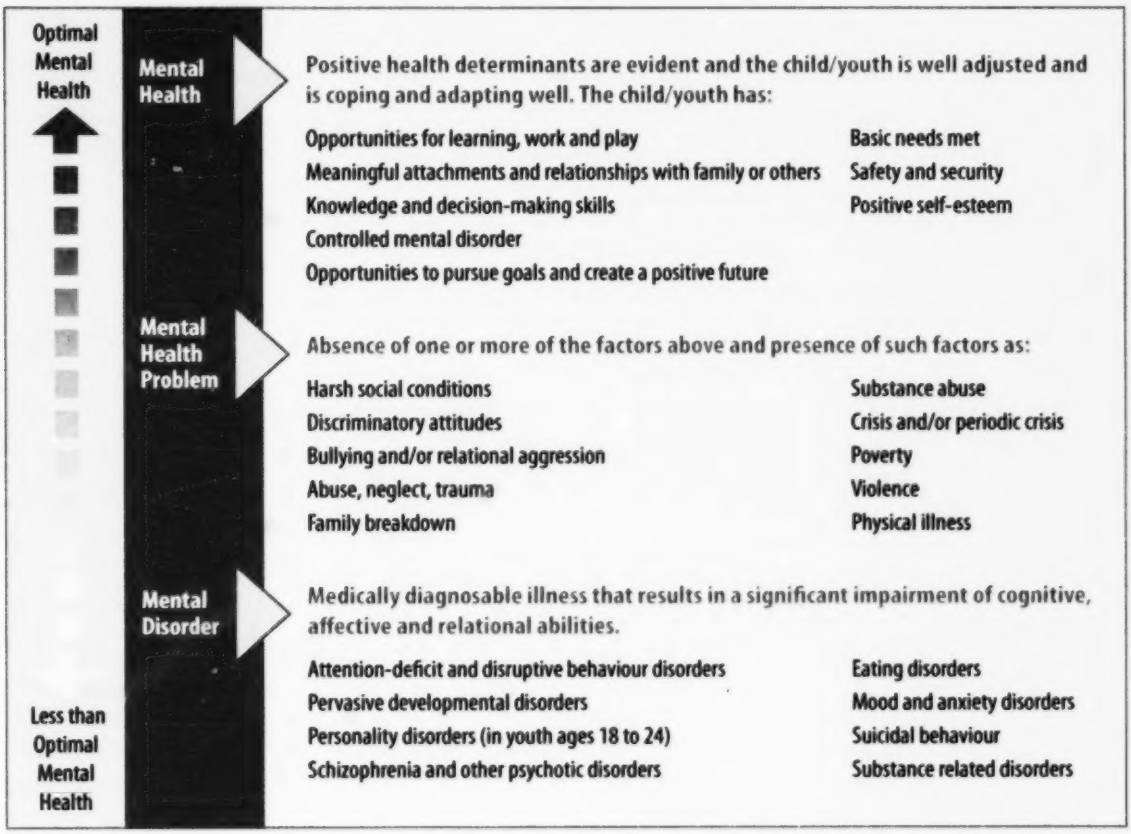
Alberta's children will be Alberta's adults in the future. *Positive Futures - Optimizing Mental Health for Alberta's Children and Youth: A Framework for Action (2006-2016)* brings us one step closer to the Alberta vision of a "vibrant and prosperous province where Albertans enjoy a superior quality of life and are confident about the future for themselves and their children".

PARTNERSHIPS

Individuals, families, community service providers and governments share responsibility and accountability for children and youth achieving optimal mental health. This will be achieved through effective collaborative action based on common goals. To this end, government ministries, the Alberta Mental Health Board, AADAC, regional health authorities, child and family services authorities, community agencies, schools, parents and youth must work together to help implement the framework and achieve the expected outcomes.

THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Mental Health Continuum


Optimal Mental Health
Mental Health
Positive health determinants are evident and the child/youth is well adjusted and is coping and adapting well. The child/youth has:
Opportunities for learning, work and play
Meaningful attachments and relationships with family or others
Knowledge and decision-making skills
Controlled mental disorder
Opportunities to pursue goals and create a positive future
Basic needs met
Safety and security
Positive self-esteem
Mental Health Problem
Absence of one or more of the factors above and presence of such factors as:
Harsh social conditions
Discriminatory attitudes
Bullying and/or relational aggression
Abuse, neglect, trauma
Family breakdown
Substance abuse
Crisis and/or periodic crisis
Poverty
Violence
Physical illness
Mental Disorder
Medically diagnosable illness that results in a significant impairment of cognitive, affective and relational abilities.
Attention-deficit and disruptive behaviour disorders
Pervasive developmental disorders
Personality disorders (in youth ages 18 to 24)
Schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders
Eating disorders
Mood and anxiety disorders
Suicidal behaviour
Substance related disorders
Less than Optimal Mental Health

Optimizing Mental Health

Mental health for Alberta's children, youth and their families will be achieved through building capacity to enhance/increase factors that promote mental health and well-being; removing or reducing risks to well-being and mental health; and providing support and treatment.

Child: Ages zero to 12

Youth: Ages 13 to 24 recognizing that young persons from the ages of 18 to 24 face a major transition to adulthood which can be impacted significantly when they suffer from a major mental disorder

THE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Building Capacity to Foster Optimal Mental Health

Children, youth, families and communities will benefit from approaches, programs and services that enhance their capacity to experience good mental health and well-being. Expected outcomes are:

- Increased responsiveness of the infrastructure to meet the evolving needs of children, youth and families.
- Increased capacity of individuals, families, communities and governments to recognize and contribute to the mental health of children and youth.
- Increased knowledge about the determinants of health and their role in affecting mental health.
- Increased capacity of partners and stakeholders to collaborate effectively.
- Increased awareness of the factors that build and sustain mental wellness among service providers.

Reducing Risks to Optimal Mental Health

Children, youth, families and communities will benefit from approaches, programs and services that eliminate or reduce risk factors associated with mental health problems. Expected outcomes are:

- Increased prevention and early intervention strategies for children, youth, families and communities.
- Decreased risk factors that contribute to mental health problems in children, youth and their families.
- Increased knowledge and ability of individuals associated with children and youth to identify and connect those at risk for mental health problems to appropriate resources.
- Increased awareness of individuals, families, caregivers and communities about the warning signs of crisis, the escalation of crisis, and the importance of timely intervention for children and youth.

Providing Support and Treatment for Children, Youth and their Families

Children and youth who have mental health disorders or mental health problems, and their families, will benefit from access to appropriate support and treatment. Expected outcomes are:

- Increased awareness of, and access to, basic services in order to enable children, youth and their families to obtain services within or close to their own community.
- Availability of specialized services in strategic locations throughout the province to meet mental health needs of children, youth and their families.
- Enhanced range and accessibility of community supports and services for children, youth and their caregivers.
- Increased early identification of children and youth at risk for mental health problems.
- Increased connection to appropriate mental health resources for children, youth, families and communities.

Activities to Support the Three Strategic Directions

Health Promotion
Prevention
Early Identification
Crisis Intervention and Stabilization
Treatment Intervention (Basic and Specialized Services)
Community Supports
Collaboration Supports

Additional copies of this document are available online at www.health.gov.ab.ca or by contacting

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